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ABSTRACT

This paper takes the position that if higher education is to serve the needs of black students, there must be a complete understanding of, and receptivity to, the needs of those students as they see them, and to the ways in which these needs can be met. University or college administrators must recognize the search for identity among black students as real and vital, that the black students need their Afro-American Societies and their Black Student Unions. It is recommended that black students be provided with facilities, advisors, financial support, and the opportunity to have meaningful dialogue with both faculty and administration. Furthermore, it is felt they need an education more suited to their needs and professors capable of teaching material relevant to blacks. The author feels that black students cannot be categorized with "white revolutionaries," because, unlike them, the black student desires to participate constructively to solve the many problems facing his community and the nation. (AF)

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

THE NEW BREED - BLACK ACTIVISTS

~~Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Education 374~~
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OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

I. Introduction

II. The Need for Identity Among Black Students

III. The Demand for a Relevant Education

IV. Portents for College Administrators

V. Conclusion

I. Introduction

Black Activists have become a force to be reckoned with on college campuses throughout the country. In many cases where they number less than one percent of the student body they have managed to influence the courses of instruction, and have even affected the total life of the campus community.

It is important that we take a close look at this "New Breed" of black students and make a determination regarding the sincerity and the validity of their charge that there must be radical changes in higher education. The Federal Government has now become involved in an unusual role. In the past, the preponderance of the government's strength and funds was used against the institutions that prohibited the attendance of black students, while using funds provided by the Federal Government. It has now had to check the liberal institutions which have acceded to the demands of the black activists who support seperation of black facilities and programs. These demands are articulated in a manner that makes it difficult for the administrator to deal with them objectively without capitulating to the demand that something be done to ameliorate the past abuses.

The committee feels that to the unobservant eye a dichotomy exists among the new breed of Black Activists. However, while the methods may differ, their purpose and goals are mutual. The existence of a split among those who struggle to bring dignity and status to the black man has been exploited by those who seek to discredit the movement and foment the traditional racial antagonisms that have existed in this country. College administrators should not make the mistake of attempting to exploit this division in dealing with the Black Activists, it would doom their negotiations

to failure. If higher education is to serve the needs of the black student, there must be a complete understanding of, and receptivity to, the needs of the Black Student as he sees them, and the ways in which these needs can be met. Administrators must not be fooled by this superficial division and therefore should be forthright in their dealing with the issues and negotiate in good faith. The committee will deal with the two primary problem areas surfaced by the New Breed of Black Activists. Understanding these problems is essential if meaningful dialogue is to be conducted:

(1) The need for identity among black students.

(2) Thir demand for a relevant education.

II. The Need for Identity among Black Students

There is a repeated cry from the Black Activists of the need for "Identify", that is, the creation of the proper image of the Black Man, not only for himself, but for his women and the white man to see as well. This implies the necessity for higher education administrators to recognize black identity, what it entails and the tremendous importance that it has for the Black Student.

The Black Student has been placed in a situation created by the passage of Civil Rights Legislation where he is forced to receive his education in an atmosphere that is dominated by the Western European Caucasion Race. He is continually presented a picture of the dominance and supremacy of this group in any study involving the activities or behavior of man. By vivid contrast a picture of deprivation, exploitat·on, colonization, and subjugation are presented whenever the Black Man or Black Civilization becomes the topic of academic discussion. History texts are unanimous in dealing with the "Colden Age of Greece." They are lavish in their praise of such ancients as Xerses, Alexander The Great, Pericles, Socrates, and Descartes, but there

is little mention of the value of the Black Civilization that was thriving centuries before Greece. When he starts to learn about American History, again he is faced with the Western European bias and the unbridled attempt to ameliorate and condone the institution of slavery as practiced in the United States. Historians, Sociologists, and Psychologists, all join hands in avoiding condemnation of one of the most immoral institutions in existence, that of slavery. The justification of economic necessity or the need for hardy agricultural workers is often cited as a mollifying condition. As the number of Black Scholars increases, they are no longer threatened by a lack of employment opportunity, thus enabling them to be intellectually honest in disseminating the fruits of their research. It is being made more apparent to the serious student that the racial bias which is and has been such a strong force in the communal life of the United States, has exercised an inordinate influence on educational literature. The Black student recognizes this today because he now has the opportunity to read and hear black scholars, Black leaders and Black radicals who base their utterances on writings, on factual information, obtained from the research of unused source documents available to the researcher, from the virual beginnings of this nation. One of the current means of establishing identity among Black Students is the use of the term "Black Power." The slogan has a two fold purpose, to let the Black People know that there is no shame or stigma attached to the fact that they were born Black, and to alarm the White Racist, letting him know that Black People will no longer tolerate his abuse and degradation. It has served as an initial rallying slogan that gives the Black Man something that causes concern in the American Society among both Black and White.

A group of students from the Federal City College were asked to, "define Black Power as you understand it; further, if you wish, work into your paper the response of people you know, to the expression, 'Black Power.'"

The following are excerpts from those papers:

> ...Black Power to the Negro provides a means of positive identification among its members which enhances their own feeling toward their background and their relation to society...Black Power is not a personal attack against the members of white society but serves as a means to facilitate a better, more equal relationship between both races...this concept serves as a type of psychological and emotional life to the Negro as an individual and a race. From its force of identification the Negro acquires a growing awareness of this relationship to society. He developes a sense of pride which enhances his everyday relationship with both white and Negro. He is now a part of a group from which he can base his goals and concepts into a workable reality.

> Black Power is the media through which Negroes in America are trying to establish a Black identity, racial pride, and it advocates a Black revolution to do so...the 'natural look' is one aspect of Black identity...White America has forced the Negroes to accept its ways of dress and tastes...The Black revolution...will accredit Negroes accomplishments in history, literature, art and music.

> Black Power is the power of the Negro to bring about a revolution of the black mass. Not a revolution in the sense of a Coup de ta (coup de'etat) but a revolution in which the black man will emerge from illiteracy, poverty, and discrimination into a state of well-beings, intelligence and racial equality...to do this three objectives must be reached; black identity, unity, of the race and education of the Negro mass...Black identity is the awareness of Negroes of their heritage...The Negro must take pride in being called a black man. Many years ago, Negroes had begun to hide their heritage because they were ashamed of it. They began conforming to the white man's way of life and wanted to be just like the white man...If the Negro is ever to succeed in the world, he must have identity. Without identity, he might as well be another unknown soldier in Arlington Cemetery. The aim of Black Power is not the transference of political power to the hands of a minority. Neither is it a fight for social integration, but a fight by an oppressed people to achieve progress by themselves and for themselves. Black Power is an awakening of a mentally frustrated and culturally deprived people to self-determination and self-respect.... The slogan of 'Black Power' is a guiding start to a people who have been made an outcast by the American society. Its psychologically builds with a Negro self-confidence, self-reliance, and a determination in every task he undertakes. Hence, 'Black Power' ful-

fills the socio-economic aims of the Negro people just as does zionism to the Jews.

'Black Power' is a call for Negroes to unite and act as one body...and by using suitable means, strive for conditions and rights long awaiting them...the chance for Negroes to prove, not only to his white brithers and the rest of the world, but to themselbes, that they are first class citizens and human beings in every respect. Black Power is not an attempt on anyone's part to overthrow the government or create disturbances, disrupting into riots. Rather it is the pea for equality.

There are basically two definitions of Black Power: The King definition and the Carmichael-Brown definition. The King definition is the one in which black people rise up from their low social position and get decent jobs, better education, more social status. It proposes that black people be proud of their race and their heritage... The Carmichael-Brown definition proposes that Negroes rise up and tear America down. It proposes that they riot and 'give Whitey hell.' This can only lead to trouble for black and white alike...I feel that King's dream of black power is the correct course for the black man.

'Black Power' is a term brought about to change the concept held by many in our society; the blackness is 'nothing.' The ultimate purpose of Black Powe is to gain black supremacy. To have the black man on top rather than on the bottom. The black man will rule in his kingdom as well as the white kingdom.[1]

The need and the desire for "Black Identity" becomes apparent as one reads these extracts, and although expressed in different ways, is nevertheless, a key concern of Black People. It is also apparent that the Slogan has accomplished much of what the originators wanted to do, it has caused Black People to think about unity and identity.

The committee feels then, that here is the first thing that administrators should be aware of in their dealings with the new breed of Black students. Let them form their Afro-American Societies, or their Black Student Unions, or whatever name they wish to call themselves. Provide

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[1] Permission was obtained from the students of Dr. Allan E. Lefcowitz, Associate Professor of Humanities, The Federal City College, 425 Second Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20001, to use these excerpts.

them facilities, advisors, financial support and the opportunity to have meaningful dialogue with both faculty and the administration on matters that they feel are at issue. Give them the opportunity to contact other similar groups both on their own campus and on the campuses of other institutions. Work with them in their efforts to go out into the Black Community and make a meaningful contribution to the improvement of conditions in the ghettos and other economically and culturally deprived areas.

These recommended actions are validated somewhat by noting an action from an institution that does not appear in the "Chronicle of Higher Education's Partial List of Campuses Hit by Recent Protests," Amherst College in Massachusetts. With a student body of 1,200, that is 95% white, the administration and the faculty support an Afro-American society, have provided a building and financial support for a Black Center containing a lecture and a seminar room, a library on Black Literature, and a coordinating center for the Afro-American societies within a one hundred mile radius. The society serves an educational purpose, since all of its meetings are open and several times in the year there is meaningful dialogue between the white community and the Afro-American Society. The society issues a booklet entitled "The Black Student of Amherst" from which most of this information was taken.

III. The Demand for a Relevant Education

The committee read numerous articles on student unrest and examined the demands of students made to the administration and to the faculty. It was interesting to note that there was a distinct difference in the demands of the Black Student Organizations involved in campus unrest and those of predominantly White Students. Generally, the demands of the Black Students centered around:

(1) Addition of courses on Black History, Culture, and Society.

(2) Making courses relevant to the needs of the Black Community.

(3) Acquiring instructors and counselors who could relate to Black Students and provide them with meaningful experiences and guidance.

(4) Providing facilities where Black Students could socialize and establish cultural centers.

(5) Admission standards that recognize that Black Students are often poorly prepared for college entrance.

(6) Financial Aid for qualified Black Students in greater proportion.

(7) Black Studies programs, subjects, and in some cases, separate departments with degree granting status.

There were cases of extreme demands such as:

(1) An all Black Faculty to teach Black Subjects.

(2) All Black Dormitories.

(3) A menu that features "Black Food" or "Soul Food" in the cafeteria.

(4) Greater freedom on the campus.

(5) Provision for more adequate traffic control measures.

(6) Creation of a college security force to handle all matters of discipline and violations of law.

The committee found that the predominant cry from the Black Students was for an education that more readily fitted their needs. These demands postulate that the separation of the races will continue, and the Black Student should look forward to knowing or learning how he can best help the Black Community. He looks with suspicion and distrust upon his White colleague and is not reluctant to tell him that he cannot relate to Black People for the simple reason that he is White and has no Black Base upon which to build his experential approach to the Black Student. This then surfaces the second concern that administrators must address when dealing with the new Breed of Black Student. There must be a valid means of evaluating instructors in higher education to determine whether they are

in fact teaching or are capable of teaching Black Students. It has been recognized in the K-12 span that there are particular skills, techniques and attitudes needed for the teaching of the culturally deprived.[2] Administrators in higher education must recognize this as well and in some cases provide experiences that college teachers will require in order to effectively teach the Black Students. Sensitivity sessions that are a required adjunct to the teaching function can be conducted. A series of courses showing techniques of instruction that use a more sensory approach to teaching, utilizing instructional aids that vividly impress an idea in the students' mind, should be a required set of experiences for these teachers. There must be instruction in the Black Studies given by White teachers. These teachers must be able to communicate with the Black Student and teach him just as effectively as a Black teacher, but he must be effective. The simple fact is, that there are just not enough qualified Black teachers to handle all of the Black Studies courses that are needed. Additionally, it contributes to real communication between races that must be realized.

IV. Portents for College Administrators

If our institutions of higher learning are to truly perform their function of providing an individual who is able to make a significant contribution to the improvement of the community and the nation, they must seriously ponder the question,"How will they handle the New Breed of Black Students?" This is a separate and distinct part of the problem of student unrest. The handling of the Black Student cannot be interwined

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[2] Strom, Robert D., The Inner City Classroom: Teaching Behaviors (Columbus, Ohio, Charles E. Marrill Publishing Company, 1966), p. 3.

with the negotiations conducted with the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) or other "New Left" organizations. These groups have capitalized on the unpopularity of the Viet Nam War and the reluctance of college administrations to make sweeping changes in their organizational structure to give students more freedom, to foment disorders designed to completely disrupt the American Society. Administrators must be quick to recognize and isolate these groups and deal with each of them separately, making concessions where sound educational practices dictate, compromising, but standing firm when confronted with veiled subversion. This is a difficult task in this pluralistic society of ours but it is the task that must be faced and solutions rapidly found if higher education in America is to survive. In a message to all Law Enforcement Officials dated September 1, 1968, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation warned:

> ...much of the trouble will come from a growing band of self-styled revolutionaries who are using college campuses as a base for their destructive activities. This comparatively small group...have contempt for the majority and our democratic processes...These extremist openly avow that their aim is to overthrow the existing order...they profess to seek a dialogue when actually what they seek is a confrontation with established authority to provoke disorder...It would be foolhardy for educators, public officials and law enforcement officers to ignore or dismiss lightly the revolutionary terrorism invading college campuses. It is a serious threat to both the academic community and a lawful and orderly society.[3]

V. Conclusion:

Black Activist are only one of the groups that may disrupt the tranquality of our college campuses. They are primarily interested in the development of abilities that will assist the Black Man to be able to participate constructively in the development of solutions to the many

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[3] Hoover, J. Edgar, "Message from the Director, To All Law Enforcement Officials," FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, September 1, 1968.

complex problems that face Black Communities and our nation. College administrators must be discerning in their dealings with Black Dissidents and quickly isolate those who are truly interested in obtaining knowledge that is relevant to the needs of the Black Community and the nation, from those who seek to destroy our society and our institutions. They must isolate these individuals in the group of negotiators and deal with them separately. Meaningful dialogue can be had with the one, while the other represents a hard-core revolutionist bent upon the destruction of our society and our nation. Each of these individuals must be dealt with, concessions and agreements can be reached with the true Black Activist, but there is no compromise or concession that will appease the revolutionary. The revolutionary must be expelled from the campus if we are to find the tranquility that is essential to academic growth. If administrators are aware of the need for Black Identity and the desire of the Black Student to get an education that is relevant to the needs of Black Communities, he will be able to quickly isolate the subversive, deal with him positively, then proceed with the serious business of seeking meaningful solutions to problems that face us today.

This is not to say that all non-Black students are revolutionary. The conservative, stubborn, antiquated, outmoded academic structures, both the physical plant and the administrative structure, need to change. There are sincere valid demands being made by most student groups throughout the country, the committee has only approached one aspect of the problem, "dealing with the Black Activists." Some of the Black Student Activists demands are similar to those of the sincere White Student who is also seeking a better and fuller education. The task of recognizing and isolating is not an easy one but the college administrators must become adept at accomplishing this separation early in their negotiations or the

results will be disastrous.

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